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ABSTRACT

Wherever democratic processes in decision-making have been tried out, administrators as well as teachers seem to agree that the advantages outweigh the weaknesses. They feel that this process ought to continue. The following are some representative values gained through teacher participation in administration. (1) Individuals grow through participation in cooperative thinking and planning, and they develop a fuller understanding of the problems both of administrating and teaching. (2) Democratic administration is a means of developing excellent staff relationships. Learning to improve relationships through cooperative effort on school problems increases the chance of broader cooperation in the life of the community. (3) Democratic administration helps to achieve the release of the abilities and powers of all the staff for the benefit of the entire organization. (4) The plans developed through cooperation are likely to be superior because the judgment of many has been brought to bear on the problem. (5) Participation in general school administration should help to encourage more democratic procedures in the classroom and, to provide greater opportunity for pupils to prepare for living in a democracy. (Author)

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EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION: A COOPERATIVE VENTURE

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Since democracy is deeply rooted in American culture, democratic principles ought to be practiced, and taught in American schools. Yet, from pure observation, it appears that many schools are far from being democratic in either teacher-administrator relationship or teacher-pupil relationship. If, however, democracy is to survive, then schools have no option but to practice democracy in every phase of operation. In this paper the writer is mainly concerned with democratic practice in schools as it relates to teachers and administrators. Should there be teacher participation in administrative decision-making? Or, is administration a perrogative of the administrators?

Unused Teacher Talent

Many a school in this country has teachers who often have more professional qualifications, and even at times, more experience, than their administrators. Certainly their professional training and experience should be utilized to the fullest in administration of schools. In this regard, the American Association of School Administrators, as early as 1947, in their yearbook, said, "Their (teachers') competency in many areas is as great as, and in some greater than, the

administrators'. For them to participate in the study of any problem that concerns them will almost certainly produce a policy which best meets the actual needs, for they are in actual daily contact with the child for whom the school exists." (Copyright 1947 by A.A.S.A.)[1]

Shared Enterprise

This well known association further felt that by teacher participation in administrative decision making, teachers have a greater feeling of "shared enterprise". As a result, they feel responsible for policy formation, and with greater enthusiasm carry out the policy.[2] The National Education Association, Department of Classroom Teachers, in connection with sharing in policy formation, says, "Sharing in policy development by all who are to be affected by the policies established is one of the foundations of democracy, and the benefits of such sharing have been demonstrated beyond dispute. When individuals and groups understand their respective roles and see the relationship of their work to the work of others, work will proceed more effectively and goals and objectives will be attained more readily." (Copyright 1961 by N.E.A., Dept. of Classroom Teachers).

Conversely, when individuals and groups do not understand their respective roles and do not see the relationship of their work to the work of others, work may not proceed effectively and goals and objectives may not be attained. Efficient and effective administrators, then, should provide every opportunity for making schools a living

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1. A.A.S.A., School for a New World, 25th Yearbook, Washington, D.C., 147.
2. Ibid.

laboratory of democracy.

How Democratic is Your School?

It is indeed sad to say that some schools even in the mid-seventies do not provide a vehicle for democratization of educational administration. Americans take great pride in building multi-million dollar school plants; school plants that are second to none; school plants with computer centers, AV/TV centers, language laboratories, resource centers, and physical education facilities with swimming pools, yet so often these contemporary schools are being administered with traditional administrative philosophy. Such dichotomy often results in confusion and wastage of talents and money. In this day and age of accountability, educators cannot continue to befool the public long. Jumbo jets are not piloted by cessna pilots. Jumbo jet pilots are trained at Seattle at the Boeing plant--where the very best technologies of aviation are used in the training of prospective pilots. Yet, so often educational jumbo plants are piloted, as it were, by cessna pilots.

In their 1952 yearbook, the American Association of School Administrators suggests, "Policy formation is a joint and cooperative enterprise of the school personnel. Employees should feel free to express themselves on educational problems and to suggest solutions. Group meetings should be conducted in a democratic manner and should provide opportunities for individual participation. The personnel must share in formulating the policies which will affect salary schedules, tenure, and sick-leave provisions, and operational policies."

It will suffice then to say that as a part of the process of preservation of democracy, schools should and must practice democratic principles in decision-making, policy formation and administration of school programs.

To what extent, then, is teacher participation desirable?

The Extent of Teacher Participation

In a study conducted by N.E.A. Department of Classroom Teachers, opinions of teachers on 50 issues, (out of 20,000 responding) shows 85 percent agreed that it is "extremely important", "important" or "desirable" that a policy statement on participation in policy planning be made available.[3] Classroom teachers have shown interest in participation from as early as 1939 as evidenced by a N.E.A. Department of Supervisors and Directors of Instruction. This study also includes the opportunities for participation in school systems. Approximately 1,450 teachers responded, representing 55 school systems in 22 states. Although teachers' responses shown above indicated that teachers in general wanted to participate in matters directly related to teaching rather than administrative matters, most exponents on the subject of teacher participation in education have agreed that if democracy in school administration is to be meaningful, then teachers must share in determining policies and methodology.

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3. N.E.A. Research Memo: N.E.A. Research Division, National Education Association of U.S., May, 1962.

In the U.S.A. teachers have been participating in the formulation and administration of personnel policies for a number of years. In 1946, according to a survey conducted by the research division of N.E.A., it was established that 87 percent of all committees in schools had teacher representation, whereas 57 percent of the committees had principals, and 26 percent had supervisors. Three-fourths of the committees served in an advisory capacity, and about a tenth had power to act.[4]

Again in 1957 as well as 1959 the Texas Study of Secondary Education asked principals if teacher participation was used in their respective schools, and the extent and values of such participation. The majority of the schools reported as using some techniques "to a great extent" in 1959. In such matters as "staff members are allowed a voice in promotion policies", and "Faculty committees represent the staff in policy formulation", a smaller number of principals reported "a great extent" of use. Fifty-one percent of the principals reported that school policies are formulated largely by the school board and superintendent.

So far, the information presented here is from public schools in the U.S.A. What about the situation in Seventh-day Adventist schools? Do teachers participate in policy formulation? If so, to what extent?

Plans Used in Obtaining Teacher Participation

Recently at a teachers' convention a principal asked, "How do you get teachers involved in administrative decision-making?" Although

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4. op. cit., p. 2.

provision of organizational structure may be less important than the climate and spirit of cooperation, no one can deny that organizational pattern is essential to develop democratic solutions to problems and thus provide appropriate vehicles through which teachers may express their ideas. The organizational pattern is only a tool, hence it should be flexible and not rigid.

There are various types of organizational patterns used to get teachers involved in decision-making processes. Some of these are advisory bodies to the superintendent or the principal. Open forums are beneficial in policy formation. Advisory groups, according to N.E.A. report (1961), may take any of the following patterns:

a) composed entirely of classroom teachers.

b) composed of administrators and teachers (the administrators serve as ex-officio with no vote).

c) composed of all members of administration, classroom teachers, clerks, custodians, nurses, etc.

d) composed of classroom teachers, administrators and principals.

e) composed of classroom teachers and pupils.

The methods of membership selection vary from school to school and system to system. However, the following methods are suggested by N.E.A.:

a) members appointed by administrators.

b) members elected by the staff.

c) combination of appointed and representative members.

True democratic participation may not be achieved where the administrator appoints committees and requires committees to report to him

instead of to the faculty, or a group representing the faculty. Often the value of group participation is not fully realized where the administrator keeps control through restrictive selection of members, thus failing to have all interest groups present.

Some traditional administrators may shudder at the thought of having student representation on committees. However, if the purpose of education is to teach the principles of democracy to today's youth and help them become tomorrow's leaders, then it is inevitable that the students be represented on committees that make decisions which affect the students directly or indirectly. Such a process provides a living, learning laboratory for students to practice democratic principles. So often educators and administrators would proudly say, "Young people, you are our hope for tomorrow, you are the leaders of tomorrow." Yet, the same educators and administrators would resent having students on committees to make decisions, whereby the students can learn to develop leadership qualities from first hand experience.

Principles to Follow in Participation

In having teachers participate in decision-making processes, the administrators, board members, and teachers need to remember the following principles in formulating school policies.

1. Teacher participation is a right and a duty.
2. Because of their training and experience, staff members can make valuable contributions.
3. The areas should be of concern to the faculty and should be worthwhile.
4. Teachers should participate in planning, steering, or drawing up the agenda in the best way possible.

5. The meeting should be kept on the purpose.

6. Discuss, research, and consider thoroughly before making decisions.

7. Let the group assume responsibility for policies.[5]

Educational administrators may use one of the three, or all of the following processes of decision-making: those made by the administrator alone, those made after suggestions have been received from an advisory group, presumably teachers, and those based completely on group opinion.[6]

What May Prevent Democratic Participation?

Obviously, there are good reasons as to why democratic principles have not been fully used in school systems. What are these conditions that may retard teacher participation? The following points are worthy of consideration as they are most frequently mentioned by teachers and administrators alike:

1. Authoritarian administration may hamper democratic participation. Teachers who have long worked under authoritarian administration are often hard to be convinced of democratic participation.

2. In order to make progress in teacher-administrator cooperation, the idea that administration and teaching are interrelated must replace the idea that they are separate fields.

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5. Ibid., p. 10,11.

6. Wood, Lloyd K., "How to use Democratic Process in School Administration", Nation's Schools 68: 43-44, July, 1961.

3. The manner of initiation may determine its successful development or its failure.

4. It takes time for classroom teachers to learn their mutual responsibility for carrying out the implications of a group purpose. It is often difficult for an administrator to learn to wait for group action.

Conclusion

Wherever democratic processes in decision-making have been tried out, administrators as well as teachers seem to agree that the advantages outweigh the weaknesses. They feel that this process ought to continue. Following are some representative values gained through teacher participation in administration.

1. Individuals grow through participation in cooperative thinking and planning, and they develop fuller understanding of the problems both of adminstrating and teaching.

2. Democratic administration is a means of developing excellent staff relationships. Learning to improve relationships through cooperative effort on school problems increases the chance of broader cooperation in the life of the community.

3. Democratic administration helps to achieve the release of abilities and powers of all the staff for the benefit of the entire organization.

4. The plans developed through cooperation are likely to be superior because the judgment of many has been brought to bear on the problem.

5. Participation in general school administration should help to encourage more democratic procedures in the classroom and hence to provide greater opportunity for pupils to prepare for living in a democracy.

If democracy is to survive--educators cannot remain hypocritical. They must practice democracy! Recently, Alan F. Westin, head of Columbia University's Center for Research and Education in American Liberties said, "Our schools are now educating millions of students who are not forming an allegiance to the democratic political system simply because they do not experience such a democratic system in their daily lives at school".

That, however, could be a topic for another article which could be entitled, "Pupil-Teacher-Administrator Cooperation". The urgent need in education today is to practice what is being preached. Traditionalism in administration kept many a school in the dark ages. Authoritarianism in school administration will destroy democratic society. Cooperation will revitalize education and provide a learning laboratory to keep democracy alive.

Since September, 1970, due to student riots Denver's George Washington High School was closed three times. "There is no feeling here. There's no belonging here", reported the March issue of Look Magazine. Principal Beardshear, trying to analyze the problem invokes the wisdom of Pogo: "We have met the enemy and he is us."